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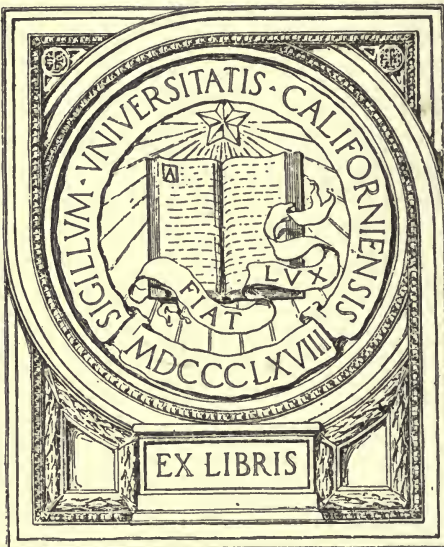
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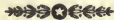
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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF

The Shakspeare Mortuary Malediction

AND

THE SEVENTEEN-FOOT GRAVE



BY

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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FOREWORD



I refer to Shakspere, of Stratford, to recognize the form of the spelling of the name according to the way the owner of the name spelled it when he signed himself William Shakspere,—there are no exceptions in his autographs. But writing “Shakespeare,” where I am speaking of the author of the Plays and Poems, I have kindly employed the term “Stratfordian” to designate the persons who assert that the Player was the Playwright.

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THE SHAKSPERE MORTUARY MALEDIC- TION AND THE SEVENTEEN- FOOT GRAVE

There are two significant facts connected with William Shakspeare's interment in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon.

First (1). Is the authenticity of Shakspeare's mortuary malediction, which is epigraphed on stone, and placed beneath the consecrated roof of an edifice dedicated to Christian worship, as unquestionably his own composition, or chosen by himself for his epitaph, entitled to acceptance as being true, or in accordance with concurrent facts, and a record of Shakspeare's own wishes, an instruction that the lines be inscribed on his grave-stone.

Secondly (2). The other statement of absorbing interest transmitted by way of an early tradition that "they have laid him full seventeen-foot deep, deep enough to secure him," contained in a letter written by William Hall, a Queen's man of Oxford, in the year 1694, to his friend the distinguished philologist, Mr. Edward Thwaites.

The Oxford graduate's statement has long been regarded as one of the traditionary reveries, but now well within the sphere of probability, and as

a guide to truth we think should carry conviction. Inasmuch as a very deep grave is protection, it supplements the mortuary malediction cut on the grave stone, which is also protective. For the lines spook the would-be superstitious exhumationist you are "blessed if you do and damned if you don't!" The credibleness, significance, and force of these facts are set forth in the Stratford Municipal Corporation's archives. Its authority put the government of the whole town in the hands of its inhabitants. For here we may look through Shakspeare's whole conduct during this struggle (1614-1618) in behalf of popular rights by the councillors who were determined to "preserve their inheritance" as the heirs and successors of the original fraternity, dissolved by Henry VIII in 1547. It was during the reign of Edward VI, by whose charter of incorporation, dated June 7, 1553, "the common field" passed to the town.

Our business, however, is to see Shakspeare as he stood in relation to the Stratford Corporation. So let me begin by asking the reader's attention to a few facts.

In the first place we learn from the Stratford records that rioting continued intermittently at Stratford from the autumn of 1614 to the beginning of 1619 over the attempted enclosure of the common fields on the confines of the town. In this connection we shall find nothing but what is discreditable to William Shakspeare of Stratford (poet or not), for on December 23, 1614, the Councillors addressed a letter of remonstrance to him on the

subject, which is an enduring attestation of an event for wrong doing evinced by his unlawful purposes to enclose the common fields. Instead of a friendly disposition towards the people ultimate condemnation furnished an index of character foreshadowing the mortuary malediction chiseled on his tombstone. Of this he is clearly convicted by the evidence in the opinion of all unbiased persons as one associated with three other land-cribbers, William and Thomas Combe, and Arthur Mainwaring, who had the audacity to question the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Coke's, authority to declare that the resistance to the corporation "is against the law of the realm."

Notwithstanding Sir Edward Coke reiterated his warning from the bench at Warwick, Shakspeare, by his opposition to the Councillors, his continued hostility and injustice, had brought down this calamity upon the townsfolk. We learn from the bailiff of Stratford, Francis Smythe, senior, that the horrors before known, the miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming village, were tenderness as compared to that new injury, the attempted enclosures of 1614-1618, the beginning of which William Shakspeare, of Stratford, saw and part of which he was—*particips criminis*, in 1614-1616. Be it remembered that of the four principal disturbers of the local peace, William Shakspeare was the only one who had gone down to the grave during the insurrection. If William and Thomas Combe had gone out of life while the riot raged they, too, would, in all probability, have been

buried on the seventeen-foot level, or at least "deep enough to secure them." Arthur Mainwaring resided in London, but was represented at Stratford by one William Replingham. However, there is nothing inexplicable about Shakspeare's interment except in the thoughts of persons destitute of the full information contained in the Stratford archives where are settled the matter of all that seems unintelligible, strange, and mysterious about his burial. For the seeming legendary statement of William Hall, the Oxford graduate, vanishes when the responsibility of the writer of the letter and eminence of the recipient are considered in connection with the four years of intermittent rioting disclosed by the Stratford records—1614-1618.

The archives of the Stratford Corporation supply full knowledge of facts as to the cause of the uprising, and the official papers are essentially supplemented by a remaining fragment of Thomas Greene's (the Town clerk) private diary from Nov. 15, 1614, to Feb. 19, 1616-1617.

And here let me give the explanation supplied by the Corporation records. The traditions which ascribe to William Shakspeare of Stratford the authorship of the boorish curse cut on his chanced tombstone had its genesis in the seventeenth century, for the earliest transmitters of the tradition visited Stratford in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Mr. John Dowdall, a young barrister, in 1693, while on his way to the assizes at Warwick, addressed a letter to Mr. Edward South-

well, the writer's cousin, in which he describes William Shakspeare's epitaph as "near the wall where his body is buried with **his epitaph made by himself a little before his death.**" Mr. Dowdall's statement at the time of his visit on April 10th, 1693, to Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, is the oldest testimony in existence of facts about Shakspeare's authorship of the imprecation inscribed on his tomb.

In connection with Mr. John Dowdall's description should be read the account in the following year, 1694, of Mr. William Hall, a man of letters, who took his M. A. degree in July, 1697, who became a doctor of divinity in 1708. William Hall's letter, found at the Bodleian Library in 1884, was written in the year 1694 to his friend, Edward Thwaites, also a Queen's man of special learning, a noted Anglo-Saxon scholar, an eminent philologist. Mr. William Hall, the Oxford graduate, is also sponsor for an early tradition of the utmost traditionary importance,—"**they have laid him full seventeen foot deep, deep enough to secure him.**"

William Hall writes:

"Dear Neddy: I very greedily embrace this occasion of acquainting you with something which I found at Stratford-upon-Avon. That place I came unto on Thursday night, and the next day went to visit the ashes of the great Shakespeare which lie interned in that church. **The verses which in his lifetime he ordered to be cut upon his tombstone for his**

monument have others there which follow:

'Reader for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here;
Blessed be he that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.'

The little learning these verses contain would be a very strong argument of the want of it in the author did they not carry something in them which stands in need of a comment. There is in this church a place which they call the 'bone-house,' a repository for bones they dig up which are so many that they would load a great number of waggons. The poet being willing to preserve his bones unmoved lays a curse upon him that moves them, and having to do with clerks and sextons, for the most part a very ignorant sort of people, he descended to their meanest capacity and disrobes himself of that art which none of his co-temporaries wore in greater perfection. Nor has the design mist of its effect for lest they should not only draw this curse upon themselves but also entail it upon their posterity,—they have laid him full seventeen foot deep, deep enough to secure him."

However, the Oxford graduate's letter to his friend brings to light his misapprehension of the meaning or true interpretation of the epitaph inasmuch as the spook lines were not addressed to clerks and sextons, for they were not the custodians of the graves in the chancel of Trinity Church. But the scholarly vicar of Stratford-on-Avon is the custodian of Shakspeare's grave and the

monumental bust commemorative of him and all other graves and monuments in the chancel and churchyard. His consent to the disinterment would be necessary before anything could be done by any exhumationist,—except by mob force,—for in England the vicar holds undisputed sway over his church and churchyard. And then, too, William Hall ought to have known that the custom of throwing bones into a repository called a bone-house was discontinued at the Reformation. There had been no enlargement of the ^{chancel} *chancel* vaults since Shakspeare's birth. William Hall's letter to his college confidant also disclosed the fact as to the statements of all visitors at Stratford in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that he had failed to examine the archives of the Stratford Corporation, the official papers. There is nothing to show in his account, that there had been insurrection or rioting at the time of Shakspeare's death in 1616.

How much there is in the life of Will Shakspeare that stands in need of comment, especially from a literary point of view, for all we have are six signatures in no way connected with any literary subject-matter—"only this, and nothing more!"

So then to disabuse the mind of the reader of the doggerel lines of the impression that the author was an ignoramus, Mr. William Hall is constrained to shirk out of the difficulty by assuming that Shakspeare wrote like a numskull "down to the meanest capacity" of the ignorant and super-

stitious townsfolk who were persuaded that the epitaph was the voice of the dead.

Shakspeare knew that the would-be exhumationist of that day were the townsfolk, his neighbors, and could have had no fear that his tomb would be violated by the janitor of a church. But he was in a state of apprehension fearful of the townsfolk with whom he and his confederates were at the time engaged in a pitched battle, assailing the aldermen with blows. The women of Stratford, hearing the battle cry, rushed to the battle front,—the neighboring common-fields at Welcombe,—and battled there with shovel and hoe for the common weal.

However, the solid fact is that Mr. William Hall in 1694, traditioned the generally received opinions of the townspeople at the time of his visit that Shakspeare ordered the lines chiseled on his tombstone, and also states the oral tradition about the depth of his grave.

The sponsorship of the two young men, Dowdall and Hall, as a matter of fact make themselves responsible for the early tradition that the spook lines were his own composition. Naught has ever subsequently occurred to weaken this. In these statements we have a basis for the proof they supply, the best authentication that the malefictory lines were authorized by William Shakspeare and by him ordered to be cut upon his tombstone, the one solid ground, something better than the quagmire upon which rests most of the so-called Shakspeare tradition. At any rate, Mr.

William Hall, in the matter of the depth of Shakspeare's grave, has indeed secured the positive information available on the subject of Shakspeare's interment seventy-eight years after his death. Furthermore, William Hall may have met some person at the time of his visit to Stratford in 1694 who assisted at the burial of William Shakspeare. This fact is made probable by the great age of my genial neighbor, Senator Cornelius Cole, of California, now in his ninety-ninth year, and sole survivor of the Congress that sat during Lincoln's administration. Had Senator Cole been born in the seventeenth century instead of the nineteenth, the long period of his life would take in the year 1579 as his birth year, and the year 1694, the year of the Oxford graduate, William Hall's, visit to Stratford seventy-eight years after Shakspeare's interment. Senator Cole's memory might touch the two extremities,—he would in 1616, the year in which Shakspeare closed his eyes in death, and was buried in the chancel of Trinity Church. And having attained the age of twenty-one years at the time of Shakspeare's interment, Cornelius Cole could have assisted at the burial of Shakspeare seventy-eight years before.

However, William Hall's statement is acceptable to Sir Sidney Lee who writes: "As it was the grave was made seventeen foot deep, and was never opened even to receive his wife although she expressed the desire to be buried with her husband."

Mr. William Winter felt that the lines inscribed

on Shakespere's gravestone "were unquestionably the utterance of Shakspere himself." He tells us that the tradition is as old as 1693, and that "nothing has ever since occurred to shake it." And, continues this stalwart Strathfordian: "The known fact of her husband having penned the lines was the sole preventive cause of her interment in his grave." In a word, the scare of the to-be-expected moving of Shakspere's bones while the riot raged was the cause of the barring out of his wife's bones.

So we see that it is not the depth of his grave alone that secures him, although as a deterrent it is the very counterpart of the scare-crowish epitaph which convinced the ignorant and easily deceived people of that day that this frightful malediction was and is the effect of a spook-scare now more than three hundred years old, invoking a departed spirit to deter and terrify the living from an investigation to discover and preserve from decay whatever is in that grave. Still, it is not a question of recovery of Shakspere's remains but of their discovery.

And here let me give my explanation of the reason why interments and inscriptions did not follow each other in chronological order, not generally understood by Shakspere's biographers. The fact seems to be for the sole purpose of keeping secret the exact place of his grave. We are by no means sure that there are any bones at all under the slab. His name does not appear upon the gravestone supposed to be his. So far as anyone knows there

is not now and never has been an item of proof that he was buried there. Shakspeare died and was buried in 1616. His wife died and was buried in 1623, yet her gravestone takes antecedence in the row of gravestones of the Shakspeare family immediately beneath the Shakspeare bust. On each of these stones—William Shakspeare excepted—the usual inscription appears, "Here lyeth the body," etc. We conjecture that Shakspeare was buried in reality next the wall, although seemingly below the curse-inscribed slab. Our supposition is in conformity and fitness with the reasonable hypothesis assumed that Shakspeare's burial, in the chancel of Trinity, was secret and at dead of night, and may be put forth tentatively as a basis for investigation, helpful in reaching the true information, the exact place of his sepulchre.

We are of the opinion that if William Shakspeare's body is ever discovered in the course of the excavations, it will be found next the wall below the remains of his wife. Tradition says that "she earnestly desired to be buried in her husband's grave." Dr. John Hall, who knew the exact place of his father-in-law's grave, and could not have been scared, even if not at the very time concerned therein, by a blustering ghost, may have granted his mother-in-law's request in not actually making a breach into the grave pointed out as Shakspeare's. The people of that day were led to believe that his grave, "so awfully guarded by a malediction," had not been opened up at the burial of his wife.

In the opinion of a few individuals, the church people did not feel that "the ashes of an actor were fit to lie in that sacred chancel." In support of this statement there is not a shred of evidence,—mere guess work, shaded with the coloring of their own thoughts, "for the chancel of Trinity was then the legal and customary burial place of the owners of the tithes"—its lay rectors. This gave Shakspeare, the tithes owner, the right of interment in the chancel of Trinity. Shakspeare passed away in opulence, but without any contemporary observations. And, furthermore, Shakspeare was almost always in affiliation with church people. He came into intimate relation with a wigmaker, one Mountjoy, of the Huguenot faith,—the then new evangel,—from 1598-1604. Shakspeare was then living in the Mountjoy shop house in "Silver street, London—Ben Jonson styles it as "Silver Street,—the region of money, a good seat for an usurer." (See Dr. C. W. Wallace, his researches.)

Somehow the credit of an insatiable money-hunger has always been his, while not himself a man of Puritan leanings, his son-in-law, Dr. John Hall, was a Puritan. His strongly attached friends were among the Puritan clergy. One of their number was entertained at New Place, Shakspeare's dwelling in the Spring of 1614. Dr. John Hall's personal sympathetic affections for the Puritan is unmistakable. He was Vicar's warden, and he presented to the church a new and highly-carved pulpit.

The Shaksperes of Stratford-on-Avon strike one

as being predisposed to disorder, for several members of the family embroiled the townspeople in Shakspeare's lifetime as the bare recital of them will show. Three members were charged with being disorderly. Dr. John Hall, as a member of the town council, was fined in October, 1633, for persistent non-attendance, and he was finally expelled for non-observance and for his oft-repeated disturbance at the meetings. Shakspeare's second and youngest son-in-law, Thomas Quiney, was twice fined, once for using profane language and for keeping a disorderly house, and again for his infraction of the marriage law in his wedding with Shakspeare's youngest daughter, Judith, without a license. On Feb. 10, 1616, they were fined and a decree of excommunication was issued by the Ecclesiastical Court at Worcester. So it would seem that Thomas Quiney was not "deeply read in the Oracle of God," nor that "his worst fault is that he is given to prayer."

Early in the 17th century swearing was rigorously prohibited. Still, the playwrights seemingly had great difficulty in keeping swear words out of their plays, often interpolated by the players, Ben Jonson being charged with blasphemy. "The 'Magnetic Lady' is void of all offense, yet for the profane language of this play the author then sick in bed was questioned by the Master of the Revels and it was not until the performers were confronted with him they confessed themselves."

However, Shakspeare was also a disturber of the local peace as an assistant and supporter of the

notorious land cribbers, William and Thomas Combe, with whom he was actively associated in the oppression of the townfolk in the battle of the Enclosure of Common Fields at Welcombe, a suburb, in 1614-1618, and would doubtless have been fined had not death intervened in 1616, for Shakspeare's conduct "defied the law of the realm." Not a single fact relating to the burial of Shakspeare; not a single recorded word in regard to the last offices of his remains, or transient observations from a single one who came into personal association with him; not even glanced at by his son-in-law, Dr. John Hall, in any of his medical writings. How inexplicable if the Stratford actor was the author!

But our business is to see what the man Shakspeare, of Stratford, saw, and to see the meaning of them in the cause of the event which the curse-inscribed gravestones is the effect. Although the time of the events of 1614-1616 is past, its dusty records remain as witnesses in the Stratford archives and are deducible from the events in its early times for our comprehension of them. The execrative epitaph, cut on Shakspeare's tomb, is a criminating memorial of his attempt to gain possession of the Stratford Common fields.

However, would Shakspeare, if sentient now, desire the good people of Stratford (whether he was or was not the poet) to keep inviolate his last exaction, the maledictory wish expressed and epigraphed while in the extremity of fear? But rather that the maintenance or preservation would not

meet his wishes, instead would decree that his grave beneath a consecrated roof, dedicated to Christian worship, shall be no longer guarded by malediction. As in fact there is epitaphed beneath the consecrated roof of Holy Trinity Church the only mortuary malediction contained in an edifice dedicated to Christian worship, a memorial stone of the dead on which is chiseled the avowal of a fearful principle a rule of action proclaimed so opposite in sentiment and feeling to a better humanity—"the gospel of peace on earth and good will toward men." That principle which is repellant also to ancient religious feeling save at altars of human sacrifice that were created to propitiate the Deity in the ages when he was universally understood to be a God of vengeance, a Being accessible only to cringing supplication and worshiped by sacrifice.

Mrs. C. C. Stopes, who is manifestly ashamed of "the authorship of the doggerel lines cut on his tomb," shifts the responsibility from Shakspeare to the stonecutter, tells us that Shakspeare's epitaph was probably a part of the stock in trade of the stonecutters, but the cultured lady refrains from quoting another specimen of the "stonecutter's doggerel stock-in-trade," although convinced that Shakspeare did not actually write them, in which case somebody else must have written them with the approval or sanction of Shakspeare or his family. At all events the burden of proving that Shakspeare did not write the lines cut on his supposed tombstone rests upon those who say he did

not write them. The idolatrous Stratfordian is in difficulties.

For Shakspeare's friends placed the slab they had prepared at the time of the burial in 1616 where it now rests. Dowdall tells us that the slab lay on his grave in 1693. Hall saw it there in 1694, and it is seen today on his supposed grave where it was placed more than three hundred years ago. But the most pertinent of all questions for an answer to the purpose is, Who should wish or would dare, or be permitted to chisel, a malediction upon Shakspeare's gravestone without his authority and the countenance of Shakspeare's family?

Now we do not scruple to affirm responsibility for the curse-inscribed slab resting on the grave pointed out as Shakspeare's in the chancel of Holy Trinity, for the events of 1614-1616 point unerringly at William Shakspeare who rioted in 1614-1616 against the peace of the townspeople and the government of the realm, Dr. John Hall and the Vicar of Stratford-on-Avon aiding and abetting the design of the author of the lines to prevent disinterment by the people.

Dr. John Hall, who survived his father-in-law, William Shakspeare, nineteen years, as a knowing man, would naturally have felt that considerable supervisory care of family interest would devolve upon himself. The members of the Shakspeare family, for the most part, were destitute of education. And inasmuch as Shakspeare had been one of the rioters, he felt that his bones should have all the protection that a malediction could give. Of

course this was to be expected so long as riot raged.

But why was the curse-inscribed stone not removed from Shakspeare's grave in 1619 after all danger of disinterment by the townspeople had passed? For authority had, on or before this time, suppressed the insurrection, compelling the surviving rioters of 1614-1618, (Shakspeare dying in 1616) to fall on their knees, beg for mercy, pay the fine imposed, and restore the common-lands to the condition in which they were in 1614. We answer then that the inference would naturally be that whatever opinion Dr. John Hall may have held respecting the authorship of the lines, he knew they express Shakspeare's wishes, for had he held the contrary opinion, the curse-inscribed slab would have been pitched forthwith into the Avon that flows close to the walls of Trinity.

Exhumations were common, we read, when in the year 1905 was found the body of the valorous Admiral John Paul Jones, the American Ambassador to France, General Horace Porter, having been six years seeking to locate the remains of one of the greatest sea fighters of history. The discovered remains were positively identified and were exhumed after his body had been buried for more than 100 years in the old-abandoned cemetery of Saint Luis, in the City of Paris.

Dr. Inglesby, a votarist of Shakspeare, himself a life trustee of the tomb which he thought was that of the poet, many years ago very respectfully demanded that the grave be opened, and all

the means of science be employed for the better preservation of the mortal remains.

Oliver Wendell Holmes was also an earnest advocate of the view taken by Dr. Inglesby that it was a paramount duty that Shakspeare's grave be opened to repair to make amends for three hundred years of neglect. But with equal seriousness Halliwell-Phillips, protesting against the proposed disinterment, says:

"If a skull were found in the grave, and its formation corresponded with the monumental bust, there would be merely a confirmation of our present knowledge. If, on the contrary, the formation did not so correspond, the inference would naturally be that it was not Shakespeare's, the evidence of the bust altogether outweighing that of a particular skull found in the grave."

But it all depends where a particular skull is found, whether on the six-foot or seventeen-foot level. Mr. Phillips assumes that Shakspeare's bones rest on a common level, as do the remains of all his fellow townspeople buried in the chancel. But if a skull were found "full seventeen feet deep," no matter what the state of affairs attendant upon Shakspeare's interment, the great depth at which a particular skull is found will serve as proof for identification, the evidence of the skull wholly outweighing that of the monumental bust and accredited portrait.

What may be called "aspiring families of wealth" have almost exclusive possession of the

chancel space in Holy Trinity. John Combe, who was laid to rest in Trinity Church with much formality the 10th day of July, 1614, from whom Shakspeare inherited five pounds, like his old friend, was a "hard creditor."

The Combes,—Uncle John and his nephew, William, and Thomas,—were very wealthy and, like Wililam Shakspeare, notorious for their harsh, unfeeling method of treating indigent debtors in "spacious times," when imprisonment for debt was in practice. But for all that Uncle John Combe, during more than 300 years, and being still without the malediction's protection, rests in his family monument in Holy Trinity. We know why the usurer's bones were in no danger of violent removal, seeing that he was not like Shakspeare engaged in land cribbing against the public weal when the summons came to lay him in the grave. John Combe's will, preserved in Somerset House, directed that he be interred in Stratford Church "near the place where my mother was buried." The old man's childhood memories hold firmly.

The saddest audible expression of sorrow, wrung from the human heart, comes from the old and lonely. They hear their mother calling, calling, gently calling, "come, my child." Thomas Carlyle, dying, cried, "I want me mither!" Lincoln said: "All I am and all I hope to be I owe to my mother." Henry Clay, dying, an old man, cried three times "mother!"

"Backward, turn backward, O Time in your flight,
Make me a child again, just for tonight."

“One of the most pathetic facts of life is that sometimes one does not get acquainted with mother until she is dead.”

Howells said: ‘A man never sees all that his mother has been to him until it’s too late to let her know that he sees it.’

A Jewish saying: “God could not be everywhere, and therefore He made mothers.”

However, the terms of the will of John Combe show a charitable impulse towards his numerous kinfolk and Stratford neighbors, and of course he should get the advantage of that kind consideration which the good people of Stratford have for the dead. However, the casualties of the old bachelor’s life were few. As a converse instance, within two months after their uncle, John Combe’s death, William and Thomas Combe, associated with William Shakspeare and Arthur Mainwaring, set on foot an insurrection—1614-1618.

Still, we are not accusing them in their graves. The dead are no longer hated. William Combe, for nearly half a century after his defeat, had lived in peaceful relations with the townspeople. He died at Stratford on January 30, 1666-7, at the age of eighty and was buried in Trinity Church where a monument commemorates him with his wife, a son, and nine daughters. Unlike that of his former associate, William Shakspeare, his tomb bore no shuddering fear. His dreamless dust rests and has rested with those he loved and with those who loved him.

Compare and contrast also Thomas Combe with William Shakspeare in his impartiality and freedom from bias in the treatment of wife and children. Thomas Combe appointed by his will the sum of four hundred pounds as the marriage portion of each of his two daughters, without favor or preference, both are treated alike. Shakspeare was not so equitable in his treatment of his two daughters. His bequest to his youngest daughter, Judith, was contemptible in comparison with the munificent legacy bestowed on her sister. Of his three children but one, his favorite daughter, Susanna, was buried in Trinity Church.

Shakspeare distributed his vast property with much partiality, the elder daughter receiving, under the terms of the will, as a matter of fact almost all of Shakspeare's estate,—all the lands, messuages, tenements, barns, and gardens at and near Stratford, together with Shakspeare's interest in the tithes and the house in Blackfriars, London. The conveyance of the Blackfriars estate to William Shakspeare in 1613 shows that he had barred his wife's dower. Shakspeare had taken steps to prevent her individual ownership of her home, New Place, also from the benefit or use of the household furniture and personal belongings.

Sir Sidney Lee writes: "Such procedure is pretty conclusive proof that he (Shakspeare) had the intention of excluding her from the enjoyment of his possessions after his death." By the way, Sir Sidney Lee was of the orthodox, or Stratfordian, faith."

The afterthought legacy of his "second best bed" to his wife and the barring of her dower and discriminating apportionment of his estate under the terms of the will, should be accepted as having been proved that Shakspeare was not an affectionate husband.

By way of contrast read Sir Thomas Lucy's tribute to his wife, a model of all womanly virtues, which he epigraphed on stone and placed over her tomb. It tells the story of their love, and reveals the gentle nature of her husband (Sir Thomas Lucy) a nature grateful and lovable.

But suddenly the parting summons comes to Shakspeare in early Spring at Stratford in 1616. And probably at "noon of night" they bore him to that quiet resting place. Here he lies, "dust to dust," without, apparently, public notice; certainly there was no ceremonious funeral. A few dejected friends, the mourners for the dead, assemble in the dismal shadows of the chancel of Trinity Church to lay him in the grave. He was not then shrined in the loving memory of the townspeople. No poet had wailed a dirge for Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon. Obituary silence! "Merely this and nothing more."

As the imprecating lines inscribed on his chancel grave attest, Washington Irving writes, "lines which have in them something extremely awful."

But the grave had already been opened up in the chancel of Trinity Church, not without considerable difficulty if his grave was dug seventeen feet deep. For, inasmuch as the Avon runs close to

the walls of Trinity (its surface not more than three or four feet below the chancel floor, the inflow through the seepy ground considerable and, of course, buckets were used to bail out the water if pumps were not in use at Stratford. To all appearance they sunk his grave as low as they could with safety. Without retaining walls there was danger of caving, for Shakspeare was buried in the ground, not in a vault. Nevertheless, the depth of his grave, which may easily be determined by sinking a shaft on the outside of the wall of Trinity to the seventeen-foot level and tunneling made in order to locate his grave; or, if necessary, cross-cut. The condition of the ground at the tunnel would disclose the approach to his grave, "moving my bones" not being an essential requisite in determining the measure of Shakspeare's grave.

At any rate, Wililam Hall, a Queen's man, Oxford, seems to state the tradition with exactness and true-heartedness:

The probable cause of Shakspeare's untimely death was the unsanitary situation at Stratford—its fetid pools of stagnant water, full of refuse, wallowing swine and carrion crows:

"Thus like the sad presaging raven that tolls
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak
And, in the shadow of the silent night,
Doth shake contagion from her sable wings."

"The most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretched-looking town in all Britain," is David Garrick's unsavory description of Stratford at the time of the jubilee in 1769."

The sanitary condition of Stratford in Shakspeare's day, and for many generations, was simply terrible. Here is the proof:

The vicarage of Stratford-on-Avon was held from 1619 to 1638, or, according to Wheler's Catalogue, till 1640, by the Rev. Thomas Wilson, B.D. He was suspended for three months from 5th June, 1635, by Archbishop Laud, Vicar-General, for being "notorious." He incurs disgrace for allowing his children to play at ball and other games in the house of worship, himself hiking about the church in time of divine service; for suffering his hogs to snuggle in the chancel of Holy Trinity and his fowls to roost there.

The cock's clarion note may have been heard from a perch upon the bust of Shakspeare just above the chancel floor—a sordid place of worship, indeed! Who would have thought it when in the year of Dr. John Hall's death in 1635 the quack of the duck, the raucous throat-tones of the goose, and the squawk of the barnyard fowls were heard in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church!

However, the Columbus who discovered Stratford-on-Avon was the great American showman, Phineas Taylor Barnum, by offering to buy the so-called Shakspeare cottage (his birth-place), wreck it, and send it to America. It did not signify much to Barnum that, as a matter of truth the old cottage did not rest historically on the solid ground of authenticated fact, but upon the quagmire of guesswork. The opinion that Shakspeare was not born in the house called the birth-

place, has been held by persons whose opinions deserve the utmost consideration. The accepted stuff of Shakspeare's birthplace, and that of his wife, in relation to the Hathaway Cottage, are biographic legends. It was this shrewd clever American who yankeeized Stratford into a great showplace. It was he who woke up the relic-mongers of Stratford to the fact that it were better to keep the old cottage and bogus Shakspeare relics to fool and fleece the gaping thousands who visit Stratford every year. It was an oft-repeated saying of Barnum's that "the people liked to be fooled." Or, as Makenzie puts it: "Mankind in the gross is a gaping monster that loves to be deceived and has seldom been disappointed." There is a native tendency of men to lend a qualifying observation to deception; they receive with favor a false opinion about a matter of fact.

Sir George Greenwood is right in saying that "the delusions are based upon prejudice and preconceived ideas, and die very hard."

Delusions based upon prejudice are not traceable in the soul of Abraham Lincoln who said:

"If ever I feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not wholly unworthy of its Almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country, deserted by all the world besides, and I standing up boldly and alone hurling defiance at her victorious oppressors. Here, before contemplating consequences before high Heaven, and in the face of the world, I swear eternal fidelity to the just cause as I deem it, of the

land of my life, my liberty and my love. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so till the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end do our duty as we understand it."

Mrs. Ellen Huntington Gates has crystallized into verse the spirit of Lincoln.

"YOUR MISSION"

"If you cannot on the ocean
Sail among the swiftest fleet,
Rocking on the highest billow,
Laughing at the storms you meet,
You can stand among the sailors,
Anchored yet within the bay,
You can lend a hand to help them,
As they launch their boats away.

"If you are too weak to journey
Up the mountain, steep and high,
You can stand within the valley
Where the multitudes go by.
You can chant in happy measure
As they slowly pass along;
Though they may forget the singer,
They will not forget the song.

"If you cannot, in the harvest,
Gather up the richest sheaves,
Many a grain both ripe and golden
Oft the careless reaper leaves—

Go and glean among the briars
Growing rank against the wall,
For it may be that their shadow
Hides the heaviest wheat of all.

“If you have not gold and silver
Ever ready to command;
If you cannot toward the needy
Reach an ever-open hand;
You can visit the afflicted,
O'er the erring you can weep,
With the Saviour's true disciples,
You a patient watch may keep.

“If you cannot in the conflict
Prove yourself a soldier true,
If where fire and smoke are thickest
There's no work for you to do;
When the battle field is silent,
You can go with careful tread,
You can bear away the wounded,
You can cover up the dead.

“Do not then stand idly waiting
For some greater work to do;
Fortune is a lazy goddess,
She will never come to you.
Go and toil in any vineyard,
Do not fear to do or dare,
If you want a field of labor,
You can find it anywhere.”

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Chapman

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